DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 101 PS 021 169

TITLE	Your Child and the National Curriculum: A Parent's Guide to What Is Taught in Schools.
INSTITUTION	Department of Education and Science, London (England).
PUB DATE	91
NOTE	17p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; Academic Standards; Basic Skills; *Curriculum Design; *Elementary School Curriculum; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Parent Materials; *Secondary School Curriculum
IDENTIFIERS	*British National Curriculum; England; Wales

ABSTRACT

Designed for parents with children in the British school system, this booklet describes the National Curriculum, which sets out what children should know, understand, and be able to do at each stage of their education from the ages of 5 to 16. Under the National Curriculum, children will be taught what they really need to know, and students and teachers will be given definite national targets to aim for in the most important subjects, thereby raising standards. Teachers will check a child's progress against national tests at ages 7, 11, 14, and 16. Schools will provide parents with an annual report on their child's progress, showing how the child is progressing in the National Curriculum and other subjects. The curriculum will cover the content areas of technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages, art, music, and physical education, and the three core areas of English, mathematics, and science. (In Wales, Welsh is also part of the curriculum). There are brief explanations of the ways in which the National Curriculum focuses on the learning of basic skills during primary education and the ways in which the curriculum changes when students enter secondary education to allow students more choices in regard to the courses they take. Basic information about course offerings, tests, and awards at the primary and secondary levels is provided. The booklet concludes with a brief listing of other sources of information. (HOD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED354101

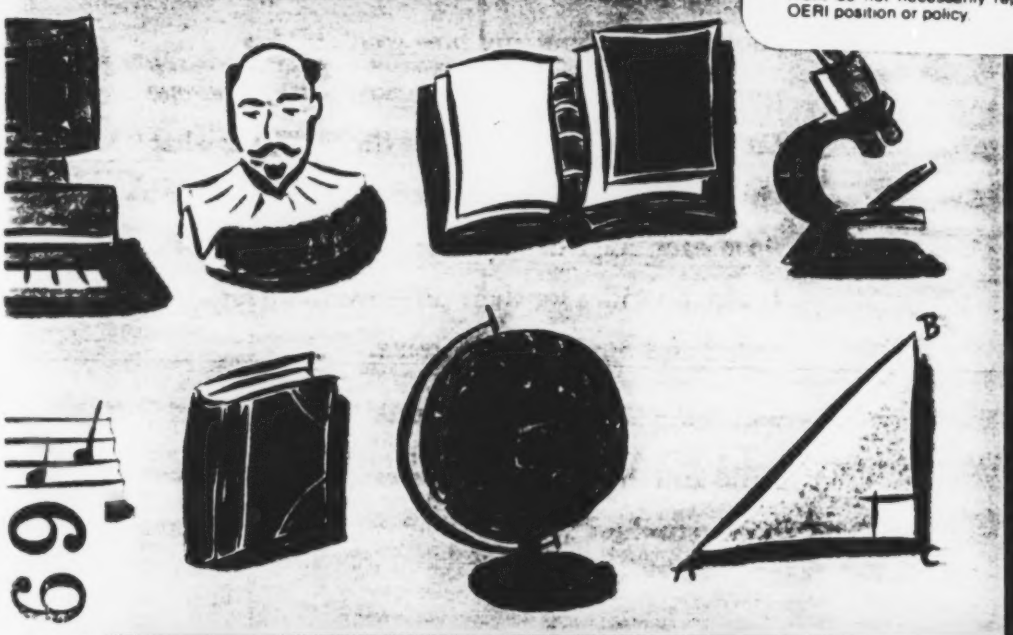
Your Child and the National Curriculum

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.



A parent's guide to what is taught in schools

PS 021691

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. Birch
— BEST COPY AVAILABLE
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

DES

Foreword by the Secretary of State for Education and Science

Your child has a right to a good education, and you have a right to know both what is being taught in your child's school and how your child is progressing. That is why we now have a *National Curriculum* which sets out for the first time what children should know, understand and be able to do at each stage of their education from 5 to 16. It also provides for their progress to be regularly tested and reported to parents.

This booklet gives you the basic facts about your child and the National Curriculum and tells you how to find out more.

Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke QC MP

Contents

The National Curriculum 2-3

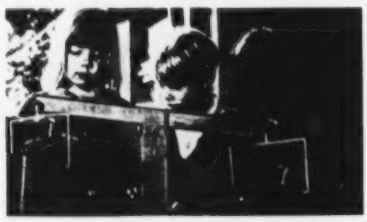
What the National Curriculum covers 4-5

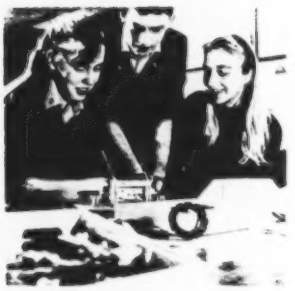
Primary education: concentrating on the basics 6-7

Secondary education: more subjects, more choice 8-10

Reports for parents 11

More information 12-13





The National Curriculum

The National Curriculum guarantees that all children will be taught what they really need to know, with checks on their progress at every stage. This means that you as a parent can find out what your child is doing at school and why. The regular tests will tell you how well your child is doing.

You can see the National Curriculum documents at any time at the school. The regular reports you receive on your child's progress will give you an opportunity to talk to teachers about what happens in the classroom and how it relates to National Curriculum aims.

The National Curriculum is designed to raise standards by giving pupils and teachers definite national targets to aim for in the most important subjects. As children get older and learn more, the targets become steadily more difficult so that they are always motivated to do their best.

Teachers will check your child's progress against the national

targets as part of their normal day-to-day work. There will also be national tests at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16. The results of these tests will be reported to you so that you can follow your child's progress and work with the teachers to help that progress along. This will help them set a pace which is right for your child, building on strengths and tackling weaknesses.

This combination of clear targets and national tests will help ensure that:

- teachers have the highest possible expectations of their pupils;
- standards are raised in schools right across the country;
- pupils can move from one school to another without disrupting their education;
- you, as a parent, can hold your child's school to account for the progress your child is making and for the standards of the school generally.

All state schools follow the National Curriculum and many independent schools are choosing to use it as well.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The National Curriculum is only part of what the school offers your child. All children also take Religious Education unless their parents specifically choose otherwise. And the school will want to bring out the best in your child not just in terms of academic skills but personal qualities as well. The school prospectus will tell you what the school's aims are and how it tries to achieve them through school activities.

What the National Curriculum covers

The National Curriculum is made up of ten subjects. At the centre are the "core" subjects of *English*, *mathematics* and *science*. The other subjects are technology, history, geography, a modern foreign language, art, music and physical education. In Wales, Welsh is also part of the National Curriculum.

These folders tell you what is in the National Curriculum. You can see them at your child's school. The remaining National Curriculum subjects – music, art and PE – will be introduced from Autumn 1992.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The National Curriculum is being introduced gradually. Most children under 14 are following parts of it already. It will be fully in place by the mid-1990s.

The examples show which subjects two typical children would study and when they would usually be tested:

Billy will start at primary school in Autumn 1992.

He will start to learn all of the National Curriculum subjects except a modern foreign language. That is, he will study the three core subjects – English, science and mathematics – plus technology, history, geography, art, music and physical education.

At the end of the school year 1993/4, when he is 7, Billy's progress in all these subjects will be assessed by his teacher, and there will be simple formal tests in English, maths and science.

At the end of the school year 1997/8, when he is 11, Billy will again be assessed in all these subjects. This time, formal written tests are likely to play a bigger part in the assessment.

Billy's elder sister, Sally, will start at secondary school in Autumn 1992.

She will study all the National Curriculum subjects, including a modern foreign language.

Sally will be tested in these subjects at the end of the school year 1994/5, when she is 14.

From age 14, Sally will be able to make some subject choices and will be tested at age 16 – probably taking public examinations like GCSE. You will find more about 14+ choices on page 9.

Primary education: *concentrating on the basics*

In the early years your child will concentrate on the basic skills – learning to read and write and to use numbers. Under the National Curriculum your child will also begin to explore science, technology, history, geography, art, music and PE – making nine subjects altogether. So as well as learning basic skills your child will follow a broad, balanced curriculum that prepares the way for secondary school.

The national tests will also focus on the basics. For example, 7 year olds will be tested on reading, writing and arithmetic and on part of their science knowledge – with particular attention being paid to reading.

This will give you, as a parent, clear information about how well your child is mastering these basic skills and whether any special help is needed.

ENGLISH

Young children enjoy telling stories and playing imaginative games. This helps them learn to speak clearly, listen carefully and to want to read and write stories for themselves.

By 7 they should be starting to read independently and beginning to write legibly, producing short pieces of writing on their own, using complete sentences and spelling simple words correctly.

By 11 they will be able to read different kinds of texts and make simple comparisons between them. They will begin to match their style of writing to different audiences. They will be getting better at organising their work, punctuation, spelling and putting their ideas across clearly.

AGES 5 - 11 YEARS

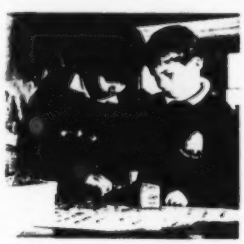
MATHEMATICS

Young children's first steps in mathematics are through counting, rhymes and practical activities like weighing and measuring.

By 7 most will be able to deal with numbers up to 100; work out change; recognise common 2-D and 3-D shapes; know the common units of measurement.

By 11 many pupils will have developed an understanding of the precision needed for mathematical calculations and of how important mathematics is in their own lives. They will know their tables, and be able to make 3-D objects, find areas, perimeters and volumes, use graphs and diagrams. They will be working out calculations in their heads or on paper, and making a start with algebra.

Children can develop their skills of designing and making through practical classroom activities as part of their work in National Curriculum technology.



Technology also has close links with other subjects – such as science, art & design or history. These pupils have learnt about Morse Code in history and are finding out how it works.

SCIENCE

Children's natural curiosity about the world around them provides the starting point for their exploration of science.

By 7 they will have started to look at the variety of living things, simple properties of materials, the effects of pushes and pulls, and the relationship of the earth to the sun and moon.

By 11 most pupils will know about living things adapting to their environment, about the formation of soil and the use of simple electrical circuits.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Secondary education: *more subjects, more choice*

At 11 pupils will be building on firm foundations of numeracy and literacy. All will then start to learn a modern foreign language as well as continuing with the nine subjects followed at primary school. Schools must offer at least one language of the European Community (such as French, German or Spanish), but pupils can take another modern foreign language instead, if the school is able to offer the choice.

There will be written tests for 11 year old pupils in all the National Curriculum subjects except music, art and PE.

From around age 14 pupils are beginning to think about what they will do after GCSE, whether they plan to continue in full-time education or training or start work. They need more choice in what they study.

ENGLISH

By 14 pupils will be able to discuss and summarise what they have read – including plays and poems from earlier centuries. They will be able to write independently and at length for different purposes – reviews, letters, essays, reports, playscripts, stories.

Between 14 and 16 pupils will be developing their knowledge and understanding of the English language and extending their range of skills in using it both in speech and writing. They will read many different kinds of texts, literary and non-literary, and be able to show critical and analytical skills. They will be able to argue a point of view using evidence from texts. They will be using libraries, reference books and other information sources independently.

Information Technology is part of the technology curriculum from 5-16 and supports pupils' learning across the curriculum – for example, communicating and handling information, modelling, measurement and control. These pupils are producing a news-sheet using IT.

Under the National Curriculum they will all carry on with *English, maths, science*, some study of *technology*, a *modern foreign language* and *PE*, but under the Government's latest proposals they will have choices to make about their other subjects:

they will be able to choose courses leading to qualifications awarded by vocational bodies like B T E C, City and Guilds and RSA. These courses will cover skills that will help them prepare for a particular kind of job or further training

they will be able to choose between history and geography, or take shorter courses in both*

they will be able to choose whether to carry on with music and art, or give up one or both*

they will be able to take up new subjects – for example economics, or another language.

MATHEMATICS

By 14 many pupils will be able to solve equations, plot graphs, find areas and volumes of regular shapes and know about π and Pythagoras' Theorem.

From 14 to 16 they will extend their studies in all areas of mathematics using their knowledge and skills in tasks related to real life.

This will include: using the memory facility of a calculator; generating different types of graphs on a computer and interpreting them; using and recording data, producing a frequency table and calculating the mean.

* The Government is consulting on these proposals before seeking Parliamentary approval.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SCIENCE

By 14 pupils will have studied food chains, chemical reactions, rock formation, and electrical motors, dynamos and transformers. Many will be able to explain about the maintenance of the balance of nature and use microelectronic devices to control simple circuits.

By 16 they will be able to explain familiar observations in scientific terms. They will understand the molecular basis of inheritance; the movements of the earth's crust; how gravity determines the movements of the planets; how to use symbolic equations to describe chemical reactions.

Everyone must take science from 14 to 16 but some schools will offer a choice of science courses. The main route, for the majority of pupils, will be the "double science" course leading to a double GCSE award. For pupils with a special reason for spending more time on other subjects there is the alternative of a reduced "single science" course leading to a single GCSE award. And there is a third option schools may offer – a course leading to GCSEs in the three separate sciences of biology, chemistry and physics. If your child's school offers this course your child cannot just take part of it – all three sciences have to be taken to GCSE level.

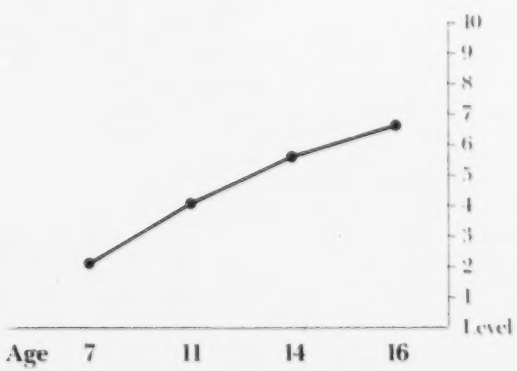
The school will tell you what choices are available so you can discuss them with your child and the teachers and decide what will be the best options.

Most 16 year olds will be tested by taking the GCSE. Almost all pupils will follow GCSE courses in English, maths and science, and many will do GCSE courses in other National Curriculum subjects. New vocational courses are also being developed for the 14 to 16 year olds who prefer a more practical approach.

Reports for parents

The school must give you an annual report on your child's progress, showing how your child is progressing in the National Curriculum and other subjects. In the years when your child takes the national tests – at 7, 11, 14 and 16 – the report will give you the results.

There are ten levels of achievement in the National Curriculum and children will move on to higher levels as they work through the national targets. Different children will move at different speeds and the same child may move more quickly in some subjects than others.



Only the very brightest pupils will reach the highest level – level 10 – which will be more difficult than the current top grade of the GCSE, grade A.

The report will tell you the level your child has reached in each subject and the levels reached in the main parts of each subject – for example you will not just be told how your child is doing in English but what level he or she has reached in reading, writing and speaking. You will also be shown how your child's results compare with those of other children of the same age.

All children start at 5 years old working towards level 1 and are likely to move on by one level every two years; so a typical 7 year old would be at level 2 and a typical 11 year old at level 4. The shaded areas show the range of levels within which the great majority of pupils will be working and the solid line shows average attainments.

More information

You can find out more about what your child is doing and what the school can offer by:

- talking to your child's teacher at a parents' evening or open day;
- discussing your child's end-of-year report with the teacher whose name is given as a contact on the report form;
- making an appointment with the appropriate teacher if you wish to discuss things at any other time;
- reading the school's brochure or prospectus – it will tell you what is being taught to each year group;
- reading the governing body's annual report to parents and attending the annual meeting arranged for parents to discuss it;
- asking to see the National Curriculum documents at the school.

Other sources of information

The *Parent's Charter*, published in September 1991, set out parents' existing rights and responsibilities, and described how the Government plans to strengthen parents' ability to act in partnership with schools to get the best education for their child. It proposed in particular that the law should be changed to provide for:

- regular independent inspections of schools;
- written reports at least once a year on each child's progress;
- annual published tables of performance information covering all local schools.

Copies of the *Parent's Charter* are available from:

FREEPOST (BS528/81), BRISTOL, BS3 3YY

The main role of the National Curriculum Council is to advise the Secretary of State on the implementation of the National Curriculum and to give guidance to schools. Its publications are also available to the public. A list of these is available from:

**THE INFORMATION SECTION,
NATIONAL CURRICULUM COUNCIL, ALBION WHARF,
25 SKELDERGATE, YORK, YO1 2XL.**

(Tel: 0904 622533. Fax: 0904 622921)

The School Examinations and Assessment Council advises the Secretary of State on the testing of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they are now required to study as part of the National Curriculum. It ensures quality at GCSE and AS/A level and is advising the Secretary of State on ways of providing parents with much greater information about their child's progress. Further information is available from:

**INFORMATION SECTION, (2ND FLOOR), SEAC,
NEWCOMBE HOUSE, 45 NOTTING HILL GATE,
LONDON W11 3JB.**

(Tel: 071 229 1234. Fax: 071 243 0542)

CITIZEN'S CHARTER

This booklet gives you the basic facts about what your child will do at school and tells you how to find out more.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE